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## **Beyond Nation State? Problem of Political Identity and Post-national Citizenship in the Context of Common Europe and Globalization Processes**

As Anthony Giddens points out *self-identity becomes problematic in modernity in a way which contrasts with self-society relations in more traditional contexts.*<sup>1</sup> It's very difficult to define identity univocally. When we discuss identity, we usually think about some kind of a "self-identity". In other words, human being with questions "who I am?" "Where I come from?" recognize oneself as a subject. Looking for a reasonable answer for these questions is a sort of our agreement for who we are. But problem of identity is more complicated. We can consider the problem of identity from psychological perspective (Freud, Mead) but human being is not only an individual but also a social creature. That's why so many sociologists also try to analyze problem of identity (Erikson, Parsons).

So on one hand we can talk about individual identity and on the other about collective one. In my opinion this "communal" dimension of identity is lately especially distinct. Particularly in the context of the common Europe and globalization processes. Moreover problem of political identity in common Europe implies problem of european citizenship. So first I would like to consider the notion of this common political identity (using Giddens perspective and Taylor's (communitarian) point of view). After that I would like to analyze theoretical conceptions of european citizenship proposed by J. Habermas and G. Delanty. Visions of European citizenship which I'll present here are generally based on participation and solidarity. It's strictly connected with the problem of European collective identity.

Because process of identification always involves construction it reveals additional characteristic. So first of all it is *a process never completed – always "in process"… conditional, lodged in contingency.*<sup>2</sup> In other words identity is not permanently given. *Rather, identity formation involves construction and reconstruction throughout "the life-course of individuals and groups and through their different faces, roles and circumstances.*<sup>3</sup> More over there is a strict connection between individual and collective identity. Charles Taylor for

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<sup>1</sup> A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> P. Kennedy, *Introduction: Globalization and the Crises of Identities?* [in:] *Globalization and National Identities. Crisis or Opportunity?* Edited by P. Kennedy and C.J.Danks, Palgrave Publishers 2001, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

instance attempts to specify the relation between the identity and the contemporaneity. That's why he distinguishes three contexts of a general use of the word "identity". Firstly we have identity as a moral (ethical) horizon. This aspect of identity marks us a horizon of the moral world. We know, what is for us really important and what is less essential. However the moral horizon is not a personal property. It is something universal in a wider meaning and something instituted. So the second aspect of identity is a particular choice of individual. Every person has to find it's own identity. From Taylor's point of view our contemporary identity is based on this particular choice of identity. And that is why the identity determines an integral element of the contemporary civilization. Finally we cannot limit ourselves only to particular identity, we must also take into account the nations in all processes of identity. So we need to consider in the process of identification the collective (common) identity. Nations work in definite space, among other subjects and they demand acknowledgements from each other. In a way community is shaped by its members. The community's identity is possible only when the members of the community identify themselves as its members. We can even say that there is a certain interdependence between individual and collective identity – when we try to analyze nation we convince ourselves that identity is a necessity – this is determined by criteria of legitimization.

This communitarian perspective implies first of all the importance of "communication" or "common language". *We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. (...) My own identity depends in my dialogical relations with others.*<sup>4</sup> So we can create the unified multicultural society when we understand and recognize our dissimilarities. In other words identity (sameness) is operative only in connection with otherness. There are three crucial moments of identity formation: differentiation, the settlement of self-reference or self-image and recognition by others. Differentiation is a kind of separation of the potential "me" or "us" from the environment. It consists of two processes: experiences of an other and discoveries of a self. Differentiation is not a continuous process. And what is more important here, identification is not only negation of the Other, but it is also identification with something positive and that is settlement of self-reference. Chronologically recognition may be even before differentiation. Identity has three main effects: implies your norms and values, determines the scope of rationality and the range of valid norms. European identity for example is not equal to identity

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<sup>4</sup> Ch. Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition*, in: *Multiculturalism* edited by Gutmann, A., Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1994; p. 33-34.

of Europeans – both are historically constructed social constructs. Europeans can have several identities of which the one with Europe is just one of them.

Beside tendency of uniting and transforming the world in a homogeneous global village, we can observe a quite inverse process– a tendency to diversification of cultures on one geographical area. There is an important difference between differentiation of western societies in United States (theory of multiculturalism) and in Europe. United States from the beginning were a multicultural state composed of groups of emigrants which came from Europe in aim of better economic perspectives. The emigrants formed American State in the meaning of “people”, not “nation”. In opposite, in European societies formation of ethnical nations was established on space of history. The borders of national states were never covered with the borders of cultures. In my opinion the most important relation between cultures is a cultural integration, which means creation of a multicultural society, concentrated around definite common values or a common “core of culture”. An integration as a specific unification of particular identity and universalism would be an ideal solution. In other words state should accept cultural pluralism at simultaneous intercultural transactions.

But as Darren J. O’Byrne rightly notices one of the many consequences of processes of “globalization” has been the *separation of nation and state*, and thus the *delinking of culture and politics*.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective citizenship as a form of *political identity* is separated from nationality. *Citizenship can be understood as the negotiation, at the level of individual, of the various strategies that are made available to the individual for political empowerment.*<sup>6</sup> O’Byrne points out that identities can only be empowering if they are politicized. And to be politicized they have to relate in a direct way to external power structures. They may begin as cultural, gender or other such identities. From his point of view political identity is pragmatically socially constructed. The politicization lies in the very linkage between the inner sense of identity and the external set of social, economic, political and cultural conditions. In other words to declare oneself a “citizen” is to empower oneself, but for that empowerment to have any real meaning it must connect to real external conditions.

Traditionally, political identity has been linked specifically to the nation-state. This is primarily because throughout modernity the nation-state has been the dominant form of political administration. The state, which represents the political dimension, does not have to be a nation as well. Similarly, the nation is a cultural construct that requires neither a form of

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<sup>5</sup> Darren J. O’Byrne, *On the Construction of Political identity: Negotiations and Strategies Beyond the Nation-State* [in:] *Globalizations and National Identities*, Op.cit., p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

political administration nor a geographically closed-off territory. The conflation of these two, which results in the nation-state, has not been problematic *per se*. But historically cultural identification has provided the base of legitimization which has allowed for the political and also economic sectors to flourish. Nation-states have required the support of the people and in order to attain this have sought to ignore cultural pluralism and define “nation” in monocultural terms. That’s why cultural identity has been suppressed by political identity and this suppression is represented by the “assimilationist” model of citizenship inclusion.

It doesn’t mean that the nation-state was the only source of political identity thou. There has always been an alternative perspective that locates political identity and sovereignty within individual, or within humanity as a whole. But from O’Byrne perspective political identity is pragmatically socially constructed, *political identity is constructed through a variety of group affiliations and cultural categories, which include gender, religion, ethnicity and occupation – and national identity is itself constructed through such contested sources as language and territory.*<sup>7</sup>

One of the most interesting theory of political identity was suggested by Jürgen Habermas. In his opinion nation-state is a normative anachronism based more on the identities of particular collectives than on those universal principles and procedures that characterize modernity.<sup>8</sup> So on one hand we have political order based on rights of self-determination and on the other – a community of fate based on ethnicity and culture. Habermas’ concept is based on a communication theory of identity that tries to get rid of the particularism of the nation. The overcome of the contradictory relationship of particularism and universalism seems to be his goal. He understands the blend of national consciousness and republican ethos, which has been typical for the classical Western Democracies, only as a historical intermediate stage on the way to a complete release of civic identity from any pre-constitutional and post-national identity, that is exclusively based on abstract procedures and principles, not on particular ways of life or traditions. Therefore it can only be realized to the extend that the nation disappears as a focus of collective identity. Post-traditional identity exists only in the method of the public, discursive battle around the interpretation of a constitutional patriotism, made concrete under particular historical circumstances. Constitutional patriotism and post-traditional identity is a higher stage of moral development, a precondition for politically

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> See J. Habermas, *Obywatelstwo a tożsamość narodowa*, IFiS PAN, Warszawa 1993 and J. Habermas, *Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State* in: *Multiculturalism* edited by Gutmann, A., Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1994;

catching up with the globalization of economy and society, by creating transnational public discourses, networks, and political organizations.

Citizens who are politically integrated in this way share the rationally based conviction that unrestrained freedom of communication in the political public sphere, a democratic process for setting conflicts, and the constitutional channeling of political power together provide a basis for checking illegitimate power and ensuring that administrative power is used in the equal interest of all. The universalism of legal principles is reflected in a procedural consensus, which must be embedded in the context of a historically specific political culture through a kind of constitutional patriotism.

But in the context of globalization the question is, how to define political identity under contemporary conditions, conditions in which the nation-state is no longer the central social institution, and in which there is a separation of nation and state. Giddens suggests that in a late modernity characterized by increasing reflexivity the politicization of identity takes place within the post-traditional, globalized realm of life politics. So each social actor *not only "has", but lives a biography reflexively organized in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life.*<sup>9</sup> We can say then that the construction of identity is a particular kind of social action which takes place within the context of external conditions. If modernity has always been about "making choices", then the sweeping nature of global transformation, and the inherent reflexivity of late modern life, make these choices more complex, more individualized. They move beyond the parameters set by earlier forms of political identity and towards this "life politics". That's why Giddens' features of life politics are so adequate in the construction of political identities today. Firstly *political decisions flowing from freedom of choice and generative power*, secondly *the creation of morally justifiable forms of life that will promote self-actualisation in the context of global interdependence* and thirdly *develops ethics concerning the issue "how should we live?" in a post-traditional order and against the backdrop of existential question.*<sup>10</sup>

*Our world, and our lives, are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalisation and identity.*<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly marketization, migration, communications, time-space compression and the "cultural supermarket" effect among other influences also defined and shaped our social and personal identities. And because they are now disintegrating, so individuals are losing the feeling they once experienced of having a "place in the social and cultural world".

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<sup>9</sup> A. Giddens, Op.cit., p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> P. Kennedy, Op. cit., p. 14.

There is a possibility that for some nations, collectivities and individuals, globalization is perceived and experienced less as something innately threatening and disempowering and also as a force offering challenges which can be met and managed to advantage.

The thing is our society is contemporary individualized. Giddens believes that the individual is more or less compelled to take charge of the self as a reflexive project given the weakening hold of once-powerful solidarities such as class, occupation, church, locality, gender, family and their declining ability to define and confine our life experience. Similar argumentation we can find in Ulrich Beck's theory of reflexive modernization.<sup>12</sup> The difference is Beck sees greater individual self-determination partly as a response to the additional risks caused by the environmental devastation associated with industrial modernity. Society today is confronted by itself through its dealings with risk. That's why we can talk about individualized society – there is a difference between political community (as a state) and social community (as a society). Citizenship is losing its political power and political meaning.

Social theories can be very helpful in reconstructing and rebuilding our identity. But first of all empirical work needs to be done. If nation-state is something between global context and local perspective undoubtedly the political (i.e. national) identity becomes problematic. Unless we feel safe in our “globalized” world the construction of our new identity will be impossible.

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<sup>12</sup> U. Beck, *Risk society: towards a new modernity*, London, Sage Publications 1992.

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